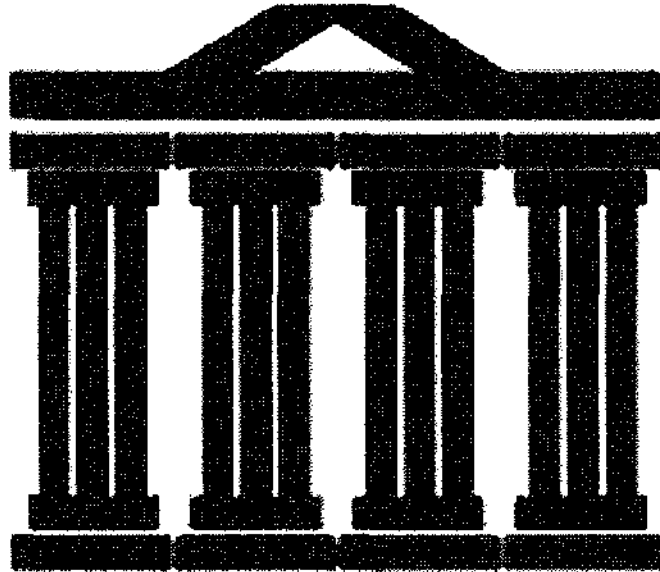


# The 2001 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem Oriented Policing



## Santa Ana Police Department Triangle Neighborhood Project

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March 26, 2001

Herman Goldstein Award Selection Committee  
Police Executive Research Forum  
1120 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 930  
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am pleased to submit the Santa Ana Triangle Neighborhood Project for consideration of the Herman Goldstein Award.

The City of Santa Ana, spearheaded by the Santa Ana Police Department, made an exceptional effort in the Santa Ana Triangle Neighborhood. This neighborhood is a multi-use locale with both commercial and residential areas; it is also located adjacent to the City's Museum District.

The Triangle Neighborhood displayed significant signs of deterioration within both its residential and commercial areas. There were also visible signs of disorder and crime related issues such as: the presence of graffiti and other associated crime from local gang members, discarded trash and large debris in high-density apartment complexes, and prostitution related problems.

As a result of the Santa Ana Triangle Neighborhood Project, many of the aforementioned issues and problems have been resolved to the satisfaction of residents, business owners and City officials alike. This project was an excellent example of the collaboration and cooperation between business owners, residents and city departments, especially the Police Department.

I highly endorse the Santa Ana Triangle Neighborhood Project for this prestigious award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul M. Walters'.

PAUL M. WALTERS  
Chief of Police



# CITY OF SANTA ANA TRIANGLE NEIGHBORHOOD PROJECT SUMMARY

## **SANTA ANA POLICE DEPARTMENT, CALIFORNIA**

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**SCANNING:** The Santa Ana Triangle Neighborhood is located adjacent to the City's museum district, which features such attractions as Bowers Museum, the Discovery Science Center, the Bowers Kidseum and Saint Joseph's Ballet. City officials consider the museum district of considerable importance to the City's image, cultural interests and economic welfare.

A preliminary inspection of the area by City officials revealed that many of the surrounding residential and commercial properties displayed significant signs of deterioration. In addition, there were also visible disorder and crime related issues such as the presence of graffiti, discarded trash and other large debris, narcotics activity, prostitutes and gang members.

**ANALYSIS:** Officers began the analysis phase of the project by conducting several detailed inspections of the neighborhood and noting the various adverse conditions present. When possible, they documented these observations with photographs for later use during brainstorming sessions. Officers also obtained and analyzed neighborhood crime statistics. Officers then used the visual observations and statistical data to isolate the neighborhood issues into three categories. These included visible disorder/public nuisance issues, property deterioration issues, and criminal activity.

**RESPONSE:** Officers began their response by summarizing the purpose and goals for the project in the two following statements:

**Purpose**

Unite business owners, property owners, residents and City departments in a collaborative problem-solving effort to address visible signs of disorder, neighborhood deterioration and criminal activity within the Triangle Neighborhood.

### Goal

Improve overall conditions within the Triangle Neighborhood, thereby creating a thriving economic climate for businesses, a prosperous environment for property owners and a safe, nurturing climate for residents and visitors.

This was followed by a series of monthly meetings between officers and members of other City departments who worked together to exchange information and plan strategies. Officers then delegated tasks to the appropriate City department, which resulted in the following courses of action:

Code-enforcement officers issued notices of violation to several properties within the neighborhood for sub-standard conditions.

Public works employees promptly removed graffiti, trash and discarded debris from the area, increased street lighting, planted twenty-seven new trees on City property and repainted the red curb zones.

The Community Development Agency organized a Business Community Watch Program, uniting business owners in an effort to improve conditions within the neighborhood.

The police department addressed prostitution, gang activity and narcotics dealing through undercover and uniformed enforcement efforts. Officers organized local residents and property owners through community meetings and door to door contact in order to gain their trust and cooperation in dealing with neighborhood problems.

The Parks and Recreation Department implemented a mobile recreation program, which consisted of after school recreational activities for the neighborhood children.

### ASSESSMENT:

Since implementation of the Triangle Neighborhood Project the overall appearance of the neighborhood has greatly improved and the area has experienced a 38% decrease in Part I crimes. The project also served to unite residents, property owners and business owners in a common effort to improve conditions within the neighborhood.

## SCANNING

During the scanning phase, officers conducted several detailed inspections of the neighborhood noting the various adverse conditions present. When possible, they documented these observations with photographs for later use during brainstorming sessions.

Officers then isolated their observations into three categories, which included **visible disorder/public nuisance issues**, **property deterioration issues**, and **criminal activity**.

These inspections resulted in the following observations:

### Visible Disorder/Public Nuisance Issues

- Abandoned vehicles
- Illegally parked vehicles
- Apartment balconies used for storage
- Improperly maintained roosters and chickens

- Abandoned sofas and other large debris
- Abandoned shopping carts
- Loitering
- Homelessness
- Graffiti
- Improperly discarded trash

### Property Deterioration Issues

- Substandard conditions of several properties
- Deterioration of existing red curb zones
- City landscaping improperly maintained
- City sidewalks and streets in disrepair
- © One abandoned residence in extreme disrepair

### Criminal Activity

- Narcotic activity
- Prostitution
- Gang activity

## PROBLEM ANALYSIS

The second phase of the project began with the identification of all businesses, residences and other properties within the Triangle Neighborhood. Officers then assembled a book containing a list of each property and the name and address of each property owner for future contact. Officers also placed the photographs taken during the scanning phase into a book next to the corresponding address. The property information served to provide a general profile of the neighborhood, which is comprised of forty-two single-family residences, thirty businesses, twenty-one apartment complexes and two small motels.

Officers also noted other facts about the neighborhood, which they deemed relevant to the planning of problem-solving strategies. They included the following:

- The neighborhood is located inside a triangle formed by 17<sup>h</sup> Street, Main Street and the 1-5 freeway. These major thoroughfares are significant barriers that isolate it from other surrounding neighborhoods.
- The neighborhood, which encompasses less than one-half square mile, is occupied by an estimated 6,500 people according to census figures.
- There are no parks or other recreational facilities located within the neighborhood.
- The neighborhood is home to thirteen "Logan Street" gang members.
- Nine probationers and eleven parolees reside within the Triangle Neighborhood.

The next step entailed the compiling of reported crime statistics and calls for service data for each address within the Triangle Neighborhood during a one-year period. The data enabled task force members to determine which addresses required the most police service in addition to helping them identify possible crime trends. The top ten business addresses and the top fifteen residential properties were then ranked in order of the most reported crimes and calls for service. This information, when combined with the previous observations made during the Scanning phase, gave officers a clearer picture of the neighborhood's most troublesome locations. Officers could then focus their efforts on alleviating the conditions leading to visible disorder, criminal activity and the need for police service.

The following is the analysis of the conditions observed during the scanning phase:

## **Visible Disorder/Public Nuisance Issues**

### Abandoned Vehicles

Research of recently stored abandoned vehicles indicated that many of them were located on or near the neighborhood's vacant residence. It appeared that people were using this specific residence to discard their inoperable vehicles. In addition, it appeared that the neighborhood was not subject to regular patrol, due to the geographically isolated location, which accounted for the accumulation of abandoned vehicles. The abandoned vehicles detracted from the neighborhood's overall appearance.

### Illegally Parked Vehicles

An examination of illegally parked vehicles revealed that people were parking in red curb zones that were barely visible due to lack of maintenance. Others were parking illegally in a cul-de-sac, in which parking legally was nearly impossible due to the configuration of the street. In this particular cul-de-sac, there were no signs or red curb designations to control parking. The illegally parked vehicles contributed to the neighborhood's overly crowded and cluttered appearance.

### Apartment Balconies Used for Storage

An inspection of the neighborhood's apartment complexes revealed that several of them had large items stored on the balconies, which included mattresses, dressers, refrigerators, trashcans and boxes. It was apparent that the property owners were allowing tenants to store these items on their balconies, which is in violation of the City's municipal code. These items were easily visible from the street and thus detracted from the orderly appearance of the neighborhood.

### Improperly Maintained Roosters and Chickens

During inspections, officers observed roosters and chickens roaming freely throughout the neighborhood. Further examination revealed that three residences within the neighborhood were maintaining numerous chickens and roosters. The birds were housed in pens that were inadequately constructed, which allowed them to escape into the neighborhood. In addition, the housing of a rooster under any condition is a violation of the City's municipal code, as is the possession of more than four chickens by a single residence. The presence of the birds created health concerns and detracted from the orderly appearance of the neighborhood.

### Abandoned Sofas and Other Large Debris

Inspections revealed that people were using the neighborhood's alleyways and streets to dump unwanted sofas, mattresses, refrigerators and other large items. The items were too large for collection by weekly refuse crews and would therefore accumulate over time. It appeared that local residents and business owners were unaware of the City's hotline used to report large items of debris, evidenced by the large accumulation of debris present. The neighborhood's isolated geographic location, may have also caused City employees to overlook the debris during their normal course of duties.

### Abandoned Shopping Carts

An initial inspection of the area by officers revealed that there were thirty abandoned shopping carts discarded throughout the Triangle Neighborhood. An examination of these shopping carts revealed that they belonged to stores located outside the immediate area. Apparently, local residents were using the carts to bring items home from the store and then discarding them throughout the neighborhood. Evidently, their accumulation went unnoticed by the cart retrieval companies responsible for recovering the carts. The neighborhood's isolated location may have been a contributing factor to their accumulation.

## Loitering

Visual inspections of the neighborhood revealed a considerable concentration of loitering activity in front of a convenience store and near four apartment buildings in a particular section of one of the residential streets.

An examination of the calls for service and reported incidents for these locations revealed that the convenience store ranked #1 among the area's businesses in both calls for service and reported incidents. Petty theft and disorderly conduct were among the most frequent types of activity generating the need for police service at this location. Another observation noted by officers was the presence of four pay telephones on the convenience store property. These telephones provided a reason for store patrons and other people to remain on the premises and thereby contributed to the loitering problem.

The calls for service and reported incident data for the residential properties indicated that the top four ranking addresses requiring police service were located in one specific section of a residential area. This again correlated with the visual inspections conducted earlier during the scanning phase, which revealed loitering in this same area. Among the people loitering, many were dressed like gang members and others were in fact documented gang members. A closer look at the statistical data revealed that many of the calls for service were related to officer initiated traffic stops or pedestrian contacts, which indicated an attempt by the police to address loitering and perhaps other illegal activity.

## Homelessness

The homeless problem within the neighborhood was limited to a single male individual seen regularly by both citizens and police officers sleeping in the area. In addition, this person was observed by citizens and officers walking into traffic, urinating in public, speaking to himself and exhibiting other odd behavior. Officers contacted the person and concluded that he was mentally ill and apparently unable to care for himself. The individual's presence in the area was a public nuisance and detracted from the orderly appearance of the neighborhood.

## Graffiti

Inspections of the area revealed numerous incidents of graffiti on both public and private property throughout the Triangle Neighborhood. Officers identified the majority of the graffiti as originating from the "Logan Street" gang. The graffiti greatly detracted from the orderly appearance of the neighborhood and gave residents, business owners and visitors the impression that gang members had a stronghold on the area.



### Improperly Discarded Trash

Officers observed trash and litter strewn about the neighborhood. In addition, they saw that many of the large dumpsters located at the multi-unit residential properties were overflowing with refuse. It was apparent to officers that the size and scope of the weekly trash pick-ups and street sweeping efforts were unable to handle the volume of refuse within the neighborhood. Officers attributed the excessive accumulation of refuse and litter to the highly dense population within the neighborhood. This condition gave the neighborhood a dirty and poorly maintained appearance.

### **Property Deterioration Issues**

#### Substandard Conditions of Private Property.

Inspections by officers revealed that seventeen properties within the Triangle Neighborhood displayed sub-standard conditions relative to landscaping and other maintenance issues. These properties were in violation of the City's municipal code and thus detracted from the overall appearance of the neighborhood.

#### Deterioration of the Red Curb Zones

Additional Inspections revealed that many of the red curb zones within the neighborhood had deteriorated to the point that they were barely visible. It appeared that city work crews had deprived the neighborhood of regular street maintenance. This resulted in the illegal parking of numerous vehicles, which gave the neighborhood a cluttered appearance.

#### City Landscaping Poorly Maintained

Officers observed that several city-owned beltways within the area lacked adequate landscaping, which detracted from the overall appearance of the neighborhood.

#### City Sidewalks and Streets in Disrepair

Inspections revealed numerous potholes in the alleys and streets throughout the neighborhood. In addition, many of the sidewalks were uneven and displayed cracks giving the neighborhood a rundown appearance.

#### Abandoned Residence

As part of an earlier redevelopment effort, the City of Santa Ana purchased a rundown residence within the neighborhood for later demolition. The residence remained unoccupied for an extended period of time and further decayed. Over time, the residence

became an attraction for abandoned vehicles, graffiti and discarded trash and thus contributed greatly to the neighborhood's rundown appearance.

## **Criminal Activity**

### Narcotic Activity

A review of the statistical data for the neighborhood revealed a total of twenty-three documented incidents relating to narcotics activity during a one-year period. Further examination indicated that among these incidents, sixteen originated from the same residential addresses with the highest concentrations of loitering and calls for police service. Officers understood that if not addressed, narcotic activity could quickly escalate and create an environment that breeds other criminal activity.

### Gang Activity

Further statistical analysis revealed that thirteen out of fourteen calls for police service relating to gang activity emanated from the same residential addresses with the highest levels of loitering, reported incidents of narcotics activity and calls for police service. Officers also noted that the area appeared poorly lit due to an inadequate number of streetlights, which may have contributed to the activity. Officers realized that the presence of gang members could create fear among neighborhood residents and visitors.

### Prostitution

Statistical data revealed no documented incidents of prostitution within the Triangle Neighborhood. Visual inspections, however, indicated the presence of prostitutes on the outskirts of the neighborhood, particularly on Main Street. Main Street borders the West Side of the Triangle Neighborhood and is a major thoroughfare for visitors entering Santa Ma. Officers were concerned that their presence in the surrounding neighborhood could potentially lead to other criminal activity.

## **RESPONSE**

The third phase of the project consisted of the development and implementation of a multi-faceted strategic plan to address visible disorder, property deterioration and criminal activity within the Triangle Neighborhood. To accomplish this, officers coordinated a massive effort between the police department and officials from several City agencies including code-enforcement, public works, parks and recreation and community development. The local community also played a significant role in the overall strategic plan to upgrade the area.

## **Community Involvement**

As previously stated, the purpose of the Triangle Project *was to* unite community members and City employees in a collaborative problem-solving effort to address visible signs of disorder, neighborhood deterioration and criminal activity within the neighborhood. Officers believed that this approach would more effectively take into account the individual concerns of community members and help establish a long-term and trusting relationship. The police department regarded such a relationship as vital to gaining the cooperation of community members and promoting the free flow of information crucial to solving many of the area's problems.

Officers reached out to the three primary segments of the community identified as the business owners, residents and property owners, understanding that each segment would have concerns unique to their group. Without their assistance, officers realized that the long-term prospects for revitalization of the area would be limited. Officers accomplished this by forming a Business Community Watch Program, providing City sponsored recreational programs and organizing meetings with local residents and property owners.

### **Business Community Watch Program**

The Business Community Watch Program served to unite the local businesses toward the common goal of improving the area. The program featured monthly meetings between business owners and members of the various City agencies working to improve the area. The meetings provided an opportunity for business owners to express their concerns and provide suggestions for revitalizing the neighborhood. When business owners raised issues relating to specific City policies or procedures, City representatives were present to provide the answer. The monthly exchange of ideas and information allowed officers to coordinate responses, which were tailored to the specific needs of the local business community. The desired outcome of the process was to improve the economic climate for local businesses, which officers regarded as vital to the overall stability of the neighborhood.

### **Recreational Programs**

During the analysis phase of the project, officers noted that the neighborhood lacked a recreational area for local residents. Consequently, children were using the streets and parking lots of local businesses as play areas. This was also a concern raised by local business owners, who feared children would injure themselves on their property or collide with a passing vehicle.

Officers responded by facilitating the deployment of the City's mobile recreation program within the Triangle Neighborhood. The program, staffed by members of the City's Parks and Recreation Department, consisted of a variety of after school activities such as arts

and crafts, roller hockey, basketball and other games. The program continues to this day and is currently offered five days a week, providing recreational opportunities to several neighborhood children. The program also assisted in developing a base of support from the local residents in the ongoing effort to improve the neighborhood.

### Community Meetings

Officers worked to unit the local residents and property owners through community meetings, in which officers provided citizens with an overview of the Triangle Neighborhood Project. In an effort to reach out to those who did not attend the meetings, officers hand delivered flyers explaining the goals and objectives of the project to 497 residences within the neighborhood. The flyers also provided residents and property owners with the telephone numbers to call for problems related to narcotics, gang activity, prostitution, abandoned shopping carts and discarded debris.

### **Other Efforts**

Officers realized that many of the neighborhood problems identified during the scanning phase required extensive efforts from the City's Public Works Department and Code-Enforcement Agency. Officers used statistical data, on-site inspections and information from citizens of the local business and residential communities to further refine the issues and develop appropriate strategies.

### Public Works Issues

Officers initiated significant efforts in the area of trash and large debris removal to remedy the cluttered and dirty appearance of the neighborhood. Due to the concentrated residential population of the neighborhood, the pre-existing trash receptacles were inadequate to handle the weekly accumulation of trash. This resulted in the distribution of trash and large debris throughout the neighborhood. Officers arranged for twice weekly trash pickups at some of the more problematic locations, encouraged public works officials to improve street sweeping efforts and asked citizens to call the public works hotline to report large debris.

Officers also launched an aggressive campaign to remove graffiti from neighborhood businesses and residential properties immediately following the act of vandalism. Local business owners, residents and police officers worked together by using the public works hotline to report acts of graffiti in the neighborhood. This resulted in the immediate removal of the graffiti by public works employees. Consequently, very little graffiti remained in public view for more than a day or two.

Officers addressed the issue of illegal parking by requesting public works employees to repaint the neighborhood's badly deteriorated red curb zones and to establish new red curb zones in other problem areas. This resulted in greater compliance with parking restrictions, thus improving vehicle congestion and giving the neighborhood a less cluttered appearance.

Finally, the public works agency further improved the aesthetic appearance of the area by planting twenty-seven new trees on the City parkways throughout the neighborhood and installing additional street lights. Although funding was not readily available to repair sidewalks and streets, the issue remains part of the long-range plan for improvement.

### Code-Enforcement Issues

Officers worked closely with code-enforcement officials to improve the substandard conditions of many of the residential properties located in the neighborhood. Code-enforcement officials issued twenty-one "notices of violation" to property owners for violations involving the illegal storage of items on apartment balconies, accumulation of debris, improperly maintained landscaping and substandard building conditions. Over 90% of the property owners have since complied with the notices of violation, which has dramatically improved the physical appearance of the neighborhood. Legal action remains pending against the small percentage of property owners not yet in compliance.

### Police Enforcement Issues

The police department addressed the neighborhood's criminal activity by gathering input from the residential and business community and relying on statistical data to determine crime trends and problem locations.

Officers used undercover and uniformed enforcement tactics to target prostitutes, gang members and people engaging in narcotics activity within the neighborhood. The effort resulted in several arrests, the majority of which took place in the very locations identified as problem areas during visual inspections and prior statistical analysis. One of the more notable arrests involved three "Logan Street" gang members who were arrested for possession of a loaded firearm. Another involved the arrest of six people for operating a methamphetamine lab within the neighborhood.

Officers also engaged in the enforcement efforts relating to the illegal housing of roosters and chickens. Although less serious in nature, the illegally maintained roosters and chickens created a health concern and detracted from the orderly appearance of the neighborhood. Officers were able to gain compliance from the local residents, who voluntarily removed their birds from the neighborhood.

In some instances, officers used non-traditional approaches to reduce calls for police service and target such problems as loitering and graffiti. When officers analyzed statistical data for the area, they discovered a disproportionate number of calls for police service at a neighborhood convenience store. An on-site inspection of the store revealed significant levels of loitering activity and the presence of four phone booths. Officers later learned that the storeowner installed the phone booths without obtaining a permit. Officers brought this fact to the attention of the storeowner who subsequently removed the telephones from the premises. This immediately reduced the loitering activity and calls for police service.

Another example of a non-traditional approach involved a city-owned vacant residence, which was attracting graffiti, abandoned vehicles, shopping carts and other large debris. Rather than use enforcement to remedy the problem, City officials opted to demolish the residence and use the vacant lot as a potential auxiliary parking area for an adjacent restaurant. Upon removal of the residence, the other problems quickly disappeared.

Police officers assigned to the project were also concerned with social issues such as homelessness, which was of concern to the local business community. Business owners reported seeing a homeless man urinating in public view, walking in and out of vehicle traffic, sleeping behind buildings and displaying other odd behavior such as talking to himself. Officers made contact with the subject and determined that he was in need of psychiatric evaluation. The officers later consulted with officials from the Orange County Mental Health Agency and arranged to have an in-field evaluation conducted by a caseworker. This resulted in a more in-depth evaluation at a local psychiatric ward and ultimately led to his placement in a long-term care facility.

## **ASSESSMENT**

Officers conducted a comprehensive visual inspection of the neighborhood to evaluate the projects' impact on visible disorder and neighborhood deterioration issues. Officers compared photographs taken prior to the implementation of the project to those taken after. These photographs depicted dramatic improvements such as cleaner streets, fewer abandoned shopping carts, reductions in graffiti, compliance with parking restrictions, balconies free of excessive debris and properly maintained residences. Approximately 90% of all the residences previously issued notices of violation for sub-standard conditions are now in compliance with the municipal code. Visual inspections also revealed significant reductions in loitering activity in both the residential area and the convenience store parking lot.

Officers utilized statistical data to determine the projects' impact on reported crime and other police activity within the neighborhood. Data included Part-I crime statistics and calls for police service for the years 1999 and 2000. The statistics revealed a 38% reduction in reported Part I crimes and a 28% reduction in calls for police service in 2000, the year following implementation of the project. In addition, incidents of graffiti were reduced approximately 50% throughout the neighborhood.

Officers also received information from business owners and residents regarding their observations and opinions concerning the projects' effectiveness. Business Community Watch meetings and one on one contacts with local residents provided the best opportunity to obtain this information. Overall, the project received a very high rating from local community members who noticed a dramatic improvement in the physical appearance of the neighborhood. Community members were also pleased with the effort put forth by City agencies to involve them in the planning and prioritizing of neighborhood issues and strategies.

One of the projects' most significant achievements was the formation of a partnership between the business owners, residents, property owners and members of the various City departments in the common effort to improve the area. Such a partnership is vital to the long-term prospects of maintaining these improvements.

Police administrators also viewed the Triangle Neighborhood Project as having tremendous value relative to the training of police officers. Officers assigned to the project enhanced their verbal and written skills by preparing strategic plans and organizing statistical data, which they presented to local government officials, members of the community and other City employees. Officers also became familiar with the tasks associated with the other City agencies such as public works, parks and recreation, community development and code-enforcement. This resulted in a better understanding by officers of the complexities of various neighborhood problems and the capabilities of other agencies to solve them. With this experience behind them, officers look at problems in a different light and begin to realize their true potential to bring about positive change. This leads to greater confidence in their abilities and a strong belief that they can make a difference in the community they serve.



CITY OF SANTA ANA  
TRIANGLE NEIGHBORHOOD PROJECT  
ATTACHMENTS INDEX

SANTA ANA POLICE DEPARTMENT, CALIFORNIA

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1. TRIANGLE NEIGHBORHOOD MAP
2. TRIANGLE NEIGHBORHOOD AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH
3. 1999-2000 CALLS FOR SERVICE COMPARISON
4. 1999-2000 PART I CRIMES COMPARISON
5. BEFORE AND AFTER PHOTOGRAPHS
6. IACP RECOGNITION
7. NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

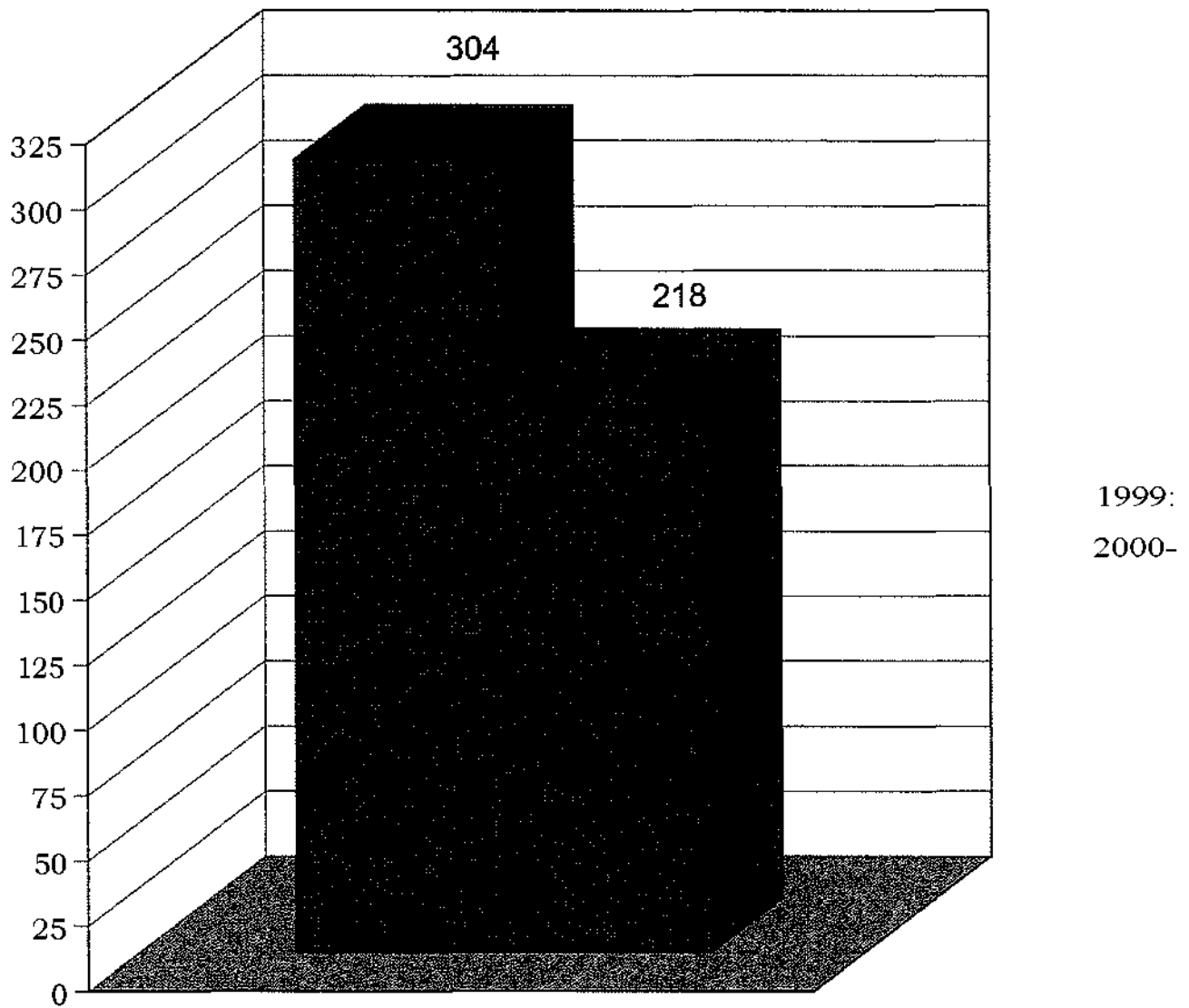






# Calls for Service Comparison

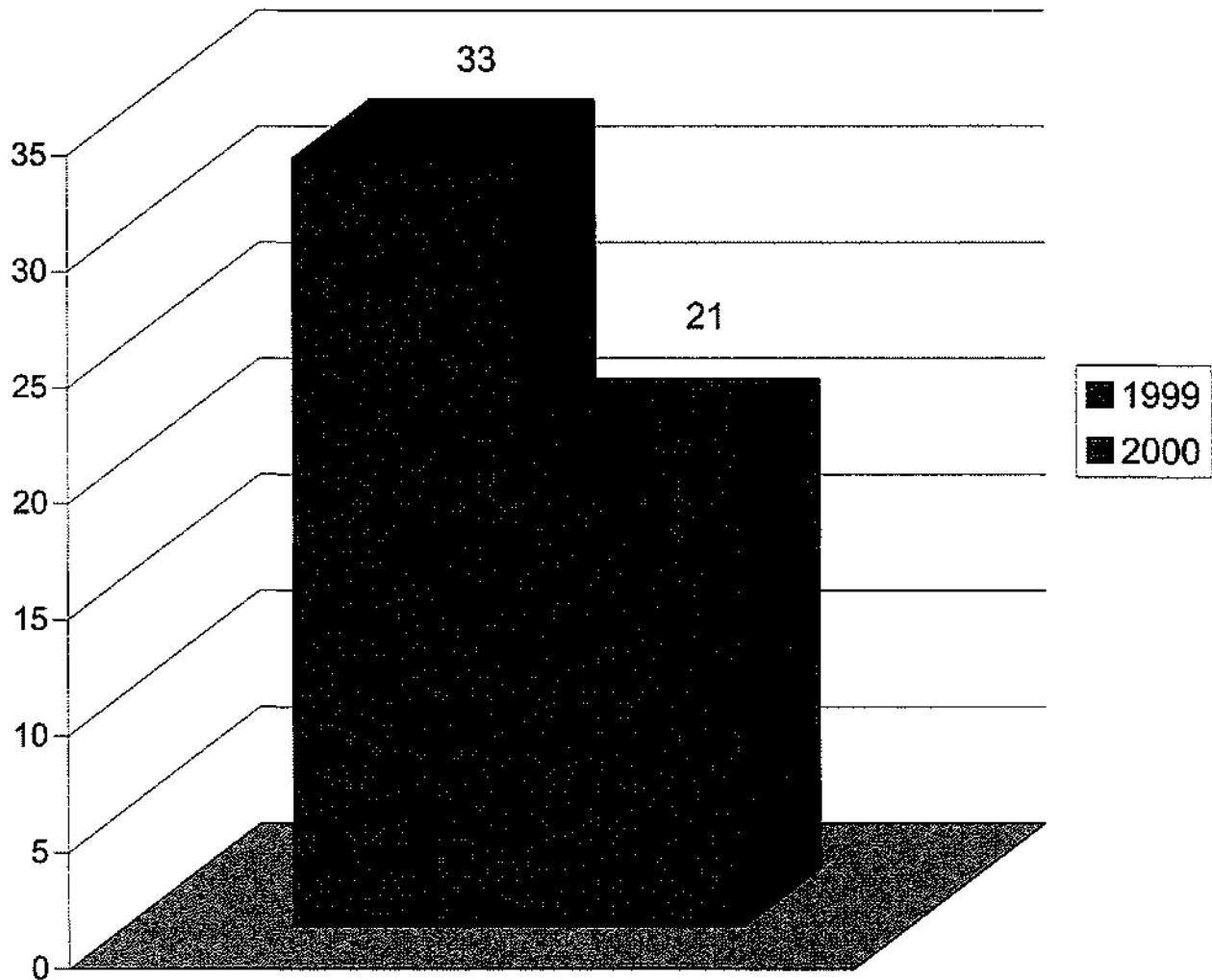
28% Decrease



Calls for service are all incidents requiring police service

# Part I Crimes Comparison

38% Decrease



Part I crimes include murder, kidnap, rape, robbery, assaults, burglary, carjacking, arson, auto theft and grand theft